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In Cameroon, official speeches extensively and frequently refer to the people's participation in development. For an example, I would like to quote from a speech made by the President of the Republic on 4 November 1981 during the presentation of the Fifth Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plan (1981-1986) to the National Assembly:

> "To devise a policy that considers all aspects of national life ... presupposes that the guidelines of planning, just as the objectives and programmes that make up these plans, are discussed and prepared with the active participation of the people's assemblies which are the democratically elected institutions of the Nation".
>
> We have endeavoured ... thanks to a popular will that has adopted major national options set by the Government and mobilized itself towards their implementation ...".

This extract from a speech by the President contains the quintessence of the notion of popular participation in the development process. In fact, this teaches us that:

The definition of objectives, the planning and programming of projects, and their execution (since this is implied) must include the acceptance and mobilization of the people. Unfortunately, acceptance and mobilization are needed for major options made by the Government and not by the people.

Since popular participation is an ambiguous theme, many discrepancies and contradictions impede it from being mobilized for development.

The point at issue is the type of development the people in which participate.

We can accept F. Perioux's definition of the concept because it tallies with ours. According to him, development is a combination of the attitudinal and social changes which make people aptable of increasing their real global product in a cumulative and lasting manner.

Development is therefore a set of transformations which affect behaviour, integrate knowledge-development, improve skills, industrial know-how, and change anticipations accumulatively.

Development is therefore a cumulative and lasting change of various economic sectors that are reflected in such coefficients as the industrial sector's share in GDP; capital used per worker and added value per wage earner.

Socially, development can be measured by indicators: number of inhabitants per medical doctor, literacy rate, percentage of patents deposited, number of films shot by nationals, etc...

In Cameroon, one of the major options of Government action is self-reliant development, that is, development by man and for man. It may be wondered whether man, in this sense, refers to the governor or the governed. Furthermore, in order to ascertain the degree of popular participation in development, it is necessary that we analyze existing mechanisms, procedures used, experiences.

The findings from such an analysis will enable us to appraise the level of popular participation in development. If this is inadequate, then it will be necessary to determine the causes and consequences of these attitudes before proposing the ways and means that are likely to lead to the set objective.

On the whole, this paper shall be divided into three parts, namely: description, analysis and prospects.

I. DESCRIPTION OF THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The institutional framework constitutes of all the tools and practices used to enable most people to participate, effectively, in the design, preparation and execution of development projects either within or outside five year development plans.

Here, it should be pointed out that immediately after achieving independence, Cameroon opted for the planning of its development. The model of planning adopted was liberal, i.e indicative for the private sector and imperative for the public sector. In fact, planning has not been rigid even for the Government since for reasons such as efficiency expediency or need, the State has always succeeded to incorporate projects not included in plans into public capital budgets. More with regard to the private sector, the plan serves as a guideline, indeed, it provides broad directives which must guide development activities even though initiatives can be taken outside this framework. However, the plan is, effectively, the driving force behind major schemes and both the State and private individuals look to it extensively for guidance .

In order to achieve the objectives of these plans, the State has established a certain number of mechanisms and procedures, and the society, owing to circumstances, has established others.

A. Permanent mechanisms

Under this heading, we shall consider structures set up statutorily or through usage.

1. Development committees

(a) Set-up: definition

Development committees were set up by Decree No. 77/89 of 24 March 1977 at the level of each province, division, sub-division and district.

These committees are permanent organs for dialogue and consultations. They are mainly in charge of examining economic problems raised socially, by the development factor, defining the action to be taken so as to solve such problems and determining the specific modalities and areas for the people's participation.

(b) Composition

The provincial development committee is presided over by the Governor assisted by his Secretary-General. It comprises:

- Senior Divisional Officers;
- Presidents of the Party's sections and ancillary organs;
- Members of Parliament;
- Members of the Economic and Social Council;
- Presidents of divisional trade unions;
- Delegates and heads of provincial technical services.

The secretariat of the provincial development committee is run by the provincial delegate of the Plan.

The divisional development committee is presided over by the Senior Divisional Officer and assisted by his first Assistant. It comprises:

- Sub-divisional officers;
- District heads;
- Presidents of divisional trade unions;
- Government delegates to urban councils;
- Chairmen of councils and municipal administrators with divisional powers;
- Officials of divisional technical services.

The secretariat of the divisional development committee is run by the Divisional Delegate of the Plan.

Sub-divisional or district committees are presided over by sub-divisional officers or district heads depending on the case.

They comprise:

- Members of Parliament;
- Members of the Economic and Social Council;
- Mayors and municipal administrators;
- Presidents and secretaries of subsections and presidents of basic organs of the party and its auxiliary organs;
- Officials of local technical services;
- Traditional chiefs up to the level of groupings and regions.

The secretariat of the sub-divisional or district development committee is run by an official designated by the senior divisional officer.

(c) Terms of reference

Development committees are empowered to:

- Identify problems relating to the preparation and execution of the development plan;
- Hold a general debate on local development problems;
- List activities to be carried out;
- Define the means to be used in carrying out such activities;
- Determine the participation area of each social group concerned;
- Set up organs to assist in and control activities carried out within the framework of given directives.

Development committees meet twice a year in ordinary session. They may meet in extraordinary session when convened by their chairmen.

Their deliberations are held in camera, and at the end of such deliberations, reports, opinions and recommendations are drafted.

Each development committee submits a report on the conclusions of its deliberations to a higher committee and sends copies thereof to the Ministers of the Plan and Territorial (Internal) Administration.

Chairmen of provincial committee give an account of their deliberations to all development committees of their various administrative units.

The functions of a development committee member are non-remunerative; however, transport and lodging expenses incurred are refunded to members residing out of the venue of the meeting.

Development committees can, therefore, be likened to bodies through which the population can have their representatives express their views in decisions which affect the economic future of their area within a period of five years. These committees are, essentially, comprised of local representatives: Members of Parliament, mayors, municipal administrators, party officials, presidents of trade unions, in short, the people's real spokes-men.

Development committees which are official organs presided over by administrative authorities, hold periodic sessions. Governors, senior divisional officials and sub-divisional officers are expected, each one in his own sphere of authority, to report on such activities.

But then development committee sessions often look like forums since debates are less technical. Local representatives try hard to have the needs of their areas retained. Unfortunately, such needs do not reflect the aspirations of the people. Rather, they solve the problems of the elites.

2. Co-operatives

Co-operatives are groups of people with a common interest who undertake a venture wherein the managerial rights of each one are equal, and where profit is shared out in proportion to the activities of the associates. Cameroon, since independence, had encouraged co-operative movements in order to group and organize business transactors so as to enable them to solve their common problems, namely: purchases, sales, protection of rights. The essential objective of the co-operative movement is to make individuals responsible for their own destiny. It primarily concerns the rural area. In Cameroon, co-operatives are placed under the authority of the Ministry of Agriculture and most of them are agricultural.

Project designers worked from the premise that farmers who are rather isolated, less educated and poor, can hardly have their voice heard. If they are grouped together, organized and educated within organizations, then they can constitute pressure groups and hence participate in or influence the taking of certain decisions.

The co-operative movement has had many set-backs. However, the Government has not given up. Paradoxically however, the community spirit of traditional Africa has not fostered this movement. On the contrary, the most educated or the most cunning members or employees of co-operatives have exploited the ignorance of members. The failure of the co-operative movement in Cameroon is, principally, due to the financial mismanagement of co-operatives. The State has stepped up the training of co-operative members and has set up co-operative unions closely supervised by public authorities.

3. The Department of Community Development

The organizational chart of the Ministry of Agriculture under which community development falls, stipulates that the Department of Community Development shall define and implement policies which enable village communities to participate in the execution and maintenance of collective rural development projects. In this respect, the Department:

- Prepares and follows up programmes for the mobilization of the people towards the execution of projects of common interest;
- Organizes the population to carry out collective self-development activities;
- Educates and mobilizes the people to support the execution of projects and ensure their maintenance;
- Prepares training programmes for village leaders;

- Supervises programmes on community education and action centres.

Results of community development activities are very evident. These activities are sometimes highly appreciated. However, in Cameroon, the community development notion is more popular amongst the English speaking population. In the French-speaking area, this notion has just been recently introduced. Therefore, it is less developed.

4. CODEVIs, CODES and COGEST: of the Regional Development Company of the East Priority Actions Participation Zones, ZAPI

The regional development company of the East Priority Actions Participation Zones, ZAPI, whose motto was "progress through participation", sought, inter alia, to:

- Encourage the creation and operation of professional associations of producers;

- Train their members to assume their own share of responsibility in the management of the company and development zones;

- Determine conditions for the creation, organisation and operation of peasant farmers' structures.

In this regard, three types of organizations were set up at the level of villages and village groups:

- Village development committees (CODEVI);

- Village cluster development committees (CODES);

- Management committees (COGESTs).

(a) CODEVIs

The village is defined by administrative authorities as the CODEVIs' participation zone. However, neighbourhoods or administrative divisions of urban areas with rural characteristics can set up a CODEVI. This committee is an assembly of peasant farmers wherein men and women, the young and the old, meet to brainstorm and organize their development activities together. Indeed, it provides a permanent forum for the people to organize themselves and hold dialogues and consultations in matters of economic, social and cultural development.

CODEVIs seek to:

- Examine the structural and economic challenges of village development;

- Define actions to be carried out so as to solve such problems;

- Determine the modalities and the areas in which subsidies can be used;

- Propose any schemes and projects relating to economic, social and cultural development;

- Organize, generally, the development of the village.

Each CODEVI is headed by an Executive, the representative organ of the village. This Executive orientates and mobilizes the rural population so as to enable them to participate in the development process, and, specifically, in the establishment of plans for production, the marketing of products, the granting and reimbursement of loans, participation in a work-team, in a thrift and loan society etc....

(b) CODES

The Village Cluster Development Committees, CODES, are structures for participation and representation at the level of a cluster of villages. They are defined as development planning consultative councils at the level of village clusters. In this respect, they:

- programme activities relating to extension, training, marketing, loan-management, development of villages etc...

- participate in budget preparation;

- supervise the implementation of programmes prepared by grassroots supervisory officials;

- disseminate information to CODEVIs and COGESTs;

CODES hav two types of membership:

- Ordinary members: these are delegates elected by CODEVIs, two per CODEVI;

- Ex-officio members, namely: village cluster municipal councillors, representatives of political and religious authorities.

(c) COGEST

The management committees, COGESTs, are structures for participation and representation of the peasant farmer at the level of local development enterprises, LDE. They comprise ordinary members from CODES, ex-officio members who are administrative, political and religious authorities, and representatives of supervisory technical services.

COGESTs play the role of consultative committees in matters of development policy and planning at the level of the LDE so that ultimately, peasant farmers assume full control of the LDE. This role consists of :

- supervising the management of the LDE;
- supervising the implementation of programmes;
- amending and adopting the budget;
- determining the LDE loans and supplies policy;
- setting production objectives;
- discussing all problems relating to rural development within the LDE.

Results obtained by ZAPI of the East where CODEVIs, CODES and COGESTs operate, are rather unsatisfactory. Consequently, the notion of setting up village organizations has not been sufficiently tested.

5. Informal structures

Recently, many associations have been formed. These associations have the most varied appellations. But then those that are tribal are in the majority. According to the 1967 Decree which governs the setting up of associations in Cameroon, the latter, would be illegal since the above instrument forbids tribal associations. Paradoxically, Cameroon Tribune, the official daily, always fills its columns with announcements convening the said associations.

These associations bring together people or the elites from a given area. Some are known as village development committees. Effectively, they contribute to the development of their community by carrying out, with their own human and financial resources, projects of common interest in the area, through to their interventions or influence.

Members of these associations usually participate in official development committee meetings, mostly, at the level of the basic administrative unit which is either the sub-division or the district. The quasi-family relations are still very strong in these associations. In principle, at a higher level only those that are statutorily empowered attend meetings. This is because the text is strictly respected. The dynamism of village development associations varies from area to area. Generally speaking, they have quite an impact even though their members lack technical know how and their finances are meagre.

B. DEVELOPMENT PLAN PREPARATION PROCEDURES

Example: The Fourth Plan.

1. Characteristics

They are precarious and their duration corresponds just to the preparation period of a five-year plan. The preparation of the Fourth Five-Year Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plan (1976-1986) was launched by Presidential Circular No. 1/CAB/PRD of 7 January 1975 to lay down the procedures for its preparation.

The circular clearly stated that planning sought to strengthen national unity and implement the self-reliant development policy. Essentially, its preparation is done democratically. All the active forces of the Nation are consulted, mostly, through planning committees. The objective is to improve the people's living conditions. The Plan takes into account the specific problems of each province and relies, effectively, on local, provincial and national realities.

2. Structures

The plan is prepared at the national and provincial level by political, administrative and consultative set ups.

At the regional level, the following consultative bodies contribute:

- The provincial development council, consultative organ, assists the Governor in the preparation of the draft provincial plan;
- The divisional development committee assists the Senior Divisional Officer in the preparation of the divisional plan;
- The rural action committee, headed by the Sub-Divisional Officer, co-ordinates village committees which are the Plan execution units at the local level.

At the central level the following twelve committees have been set up to be responsible for:

- Rural economy;
- Industry - handicratts - mines and power - trade - transport - tourism;
- Communication and telecommunications infrastructures;
- Training - employment - youth - sports;
- Health and social affairs;
- Information - culture;
- Administrative equipment;
- Scientific research;
- Physical planning;
- Public finances;
- Structures and organization;
- Reporting.

3. Preparation stages

The Fourth Plan was prepared in three main phases. Phase One assessed the execution of the previous plan and the country's economic situation so as to bring out medium and long-term development trends and prospects. Furthermore, sectoral technical study groups considered sectoral problems and the basic development equilibria of the Nation.

During Phase Two, the sectoral study groups made sectoral projections, identified and prepared projects.

Phase Three was devoted to deliberations of committees. Provincial committees met first. Their deliberations led to the drafting of preliminary provincial plans which were transmitted to the national level. National committees then met to consider national sectoral plans and preliminary provincial plans. Finally, these committees brought out sectoral objectives and assessed the human and financial resources needed to achieve them.

In concrete terms, preparatory meetings which brought together heads of services, local administrative authorities, representatives of the people and various economic sectors, were held, chronologically, in districts, sub-divisions, divisions, provinces and, finally, at the central level.

During these meetings, an integrated development programme was established. It took into account the potentialities of each area, and identified local resources likely to contribute to the implementation of such a programme.

Programmes approved at the level of sub-divisions were harmonized and put together at the divisional level. Similarly, divisional programmes were evaluated and harmonized at the provincial level. The objective was to prepare provincial plans with coherent programmes. These programmes were thus based on the people's real needs. Their implementation made it possible to meet such needs.

The major draw-back of the plan preparation structures was their short existence. They were set up and given fixed term mandates. They were, indeed, set up on the eve of the commencement of the preparation of the plan and ceased to exist when the plan was adopted by the National Assembly.

On the whole, despite the existence of a number of fairly well-prepared structures for popular participation in development, it was noted that such participation was poor. Two reasons explain this situation:

1. The people were requested to voluntarily adopt programmes defined by the State and, sometimes, participate in their implementation. But then doubts expressed by the people did not affect programme design. Even community development workers who worked with the people, failed to seek their opinion on their own aspirations. They met the supposed needs of the people and, sometimes, requested them to participate in providing for such needs. The population was hardly associated with decision-making.

2. The almost total lack of financial resources made it impossible for the population to participate in their own development. Since they were unable to decide, freely, the needs to be satisfied and to mobilize all the resources needed for such a purpose, the population dropped their aspiration and accepted just what they were offered.

This resulted in blunders which plunged, mainly, the rural population into pessimism and scepticism. Out of frustration, some resigned or became reticence.

However, whether dictatorial or pragmatic certain approaches made it possible for the population concerned to participate, to a greater or lesser extent in some projects.

II. AN ANALYSIS OF TWO EXPERIMENTS NEEDING INTENSIVE POPULAR PARTICIPATION

A. The project on women's participation in the economic, health and social development of Fang-Biloun

Fang-Biloun is the seat of a chieftaincy which comprises three villages: Effoufoup, Fang-Biloun, Kobdombo.

It is situated at about 180 km from Yaounde, in the Ayos sub-division, Nyong and Mfoumou Division, Centre Province. It has a population of about 1,700 inhabitants.

1. Project presentation

The population of these villages is made up of women, children and old people. Here, the women play a very important role in development, especially, in education and health. In these areas, the Ministry of Social Affairs launched in 1980, with WHO assistance, the first experimental project on women's participation in the economic, health and social development of this village. It was considered that training women in these areas would constitute an invaluable contribution to development. This project set global objectives for itself.

(a) Long-term

It sought to:

- encourage the full participation of women in decision-making and socio-economic development through primary health care;
- fight against infant mortality;
- identify and apply measures likely to improve the social, legal and economic situation of women and this for the well-being of rural families.

(b) Short-term

The project sought to:

- step up primary health care and integrated socio-economic development activities in the area;

- reduce infant mortality by encouraging breast-feeding, by fighting against diarrhoea through the use of oral rehydration salts, by training women to see to it that vaccination schedules were complied with;

- reduce the morbidity of the population through vaccination campaigns, and prevent certain diseases through health education based on environmental sanitation and hygiene.

- encourage social activities by creating possibilities for informal education in the village for men and women, and intensifying the training of women in various development sectors so as to improve their skills in the performance of their tasks;

- improve and develop appropriate technologies by training village craftsmen so as to reduce women's work load and labour, and increase the income of the community;

- integrate all these activities in the village and ensure that villagers participate in their execution.

2. Project organization and evaluation

The project relied on health committees set up a few years ago by the head of the Kobdombo modern health centre. These committees met periodically. During their meetings, community health workers educated the people on health. They submitted reports on these monthly meetings to the head of the health centre. A roving team of village health inspectors was set up to inspect homes twice a month.

In the villages, all these measures led to a change of attitude in the area of hygiene. The result was the construction of many more latrines and washrooms than there had been in the past. The women, the project's target group, cleaned the surrounding of water points on all first Thursdays and last Saturdays of the month. WHO came to their assistance by supplying agricultural implements, pharmaceuticals, a refrigerator, bicycles and money in cash to finance the on-the-job training of the first five community health workers.

The project grew very rapidly. Health committees increased from 60 to 107 and the number of health workers moved from 5 to 50. These workers were trained by the State registered nurse of the Kobdombo Health Centre which now trains all community health workers of the Division.

Government, with UNICEF assistance, has programmed the digging of twenty (20) wells. Men, women and children dig the wells and supply sand and gravel.

A WHO contribution led to the building of a village pharmacy and the training of the Kobdombo chief Nurse who did a refresher course in Mauritius.

The health sector has obtained encouraging results. For instance, mention can be made of:

- The building of a village pharmacy;
- The training of a female village co-ordinator;
- The training of seven health workers (5 men and 2 women);
- The drop in deaths caused by malaria;
- Improvement of children's nutrition (95 per cent of mothers breast feed their children);
- Development of six water points;
- The use of latrines by 30 per cent of the families;
- Co-operation with traditional mid-wives and healers;
- Improvement of homes: sun-dried bricks and corrugated iron sheets have replaced swish and thatching.

The economy relied on fishing, the most cherished economic activity of the area.

Fish can not be preserved because of the lack of refrigeration facilities. The selling of fish is limited because buyers are few. Consequently, drying remains the best solution to making this activity profitable.

Fish smoking is one specific activity that enables the women of the region to earn an income. But then women smoke fish under conditions that do not guarantee the preservation and the nutritional value of the product. The working conditions are hard: a lot of fire-wood is used, the house is watched throughout the night so as to avoid the outbreak of fires, etc...furthermore, traditional smoking capacity is rather limited.

In order to remove all these difficulties, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, MINASCOF, organized a workshop to train Fang-Biloun women in the Chorkor method of smoking fish. This method, used throughout West Africa, has the following characteristics:

- Capacity for processing 240 kg per day in a two-compartment oven;
- Homogeneous drying;
- Low consumption of wood;

- Easy handling;

- Cost price of oven affordable by women.

Furthermore, the women can do other things while the fish is smoking.

The Fang-Biloun fish smokes intend to organize themselves into a fish smoking and marketing co-operative union.

The social aspect relates to literacy. This has been made necessary by the development of the project.

Here, we are talking about functional literacy. The first programmes prepared laid emphasis on health and the management of co-operatives. One of the set objectives is to enable the adult, after training, to express himself in French and read any note explaining the use of a product bought.

In spite of the good results obtained, there still exist many problems, namely:

- women are not interested in being trained as community health workers;

- women lack information and training in the socio-economic domain;

- small scale projects are non-existent due to the lack of finances;

- the traditional pharmacopeia has been marginalised by modern medicine.

3. Lessons from the project

This project was based on the realities of the area: existence of health committees, existence of a river full of fish and fishing therein, has received no opposition; on the contrary it has given unexpected results. However, those uninvolved in the project initially, opposed it probably because of its name. Male elites within and without the area wanted to be involved but insisted on heading the project. This situation discouraged the women.

This opposition from the elites was dropped when the situation was examined during the management and co-ordination committee meeting during which eight new members, all men, who were desirous to participate in the project, joined the Executive.

B. Scan water project

1. Presentation and cost of project

Within the contest of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade and of WHO's bid to promote health for all by the year 2000, Cameron has designed, ever since 1978, a vast village water supply programme. Its execution received assistance from the Kingdom of Denmark.

This programme covered eight of the ten provinces of the country. Studies were carried out by a Danish consultancy firm. They led to the preparation of a four-phase programme commonly known as four programmes which cover 424 stations, for a total cost of CFAF 59,000 million almost $US 200 million.

2. Technical specifications

Four contracts were signed, successively, between the Cameroon Government and the Danish Scan Water Company.

Roughly, the following technology was used: water was drawn from a borehole and pumped into a water processing station. Thereafter, the water was retained in water tanks for distribution by use of gravitational force to individuals through taps: in principle, a tap should supply water to 300 to 500 people.

3. Project execution

The three first programmes executed covered 211 village stations. They were executed solely by Scan Water technicians. All the technical equipment: pipes, metal poles, iron sheets, were imported from Denmark even though these could be manufactured locally. The execution is already facing certain difficulties, namely: the study was conducted in haste by the Danes 'perhaps it was adapted more or less successfully from a study done for another country$, for the survey of the land was inaccurate; access point were, in certain cases, more distant than provided for in the study; it was necessary to drill very deep so as to reach underground water.

Drilling was made compulsory, even if there was a possibility to harness water on the site.

Even though Cameroon has water engineers, they were not associated with the job and no technical control was envisaged. The agency in charge of water problems was invited to receive, provisionally, the project. The reception ceremony, was full of pomp and pageantry; no technician could venture to undertake any type of verification.

The programme did not provide for the maintenance of installations or the training of operators.

This vacuum led the State to consider the setting-up of a structure for maintenance. Danish engineers estimated the cost of such a structure at CFAF two billion yearly.

The State could not take up such an engagement. Rather, it signed a supplementary maintenance contract with Scan Water, costing CFAF 383 million for a duration of four months.

As was expected, 45 per cent of the installations have broken down. The State, beset by a financial crisis, cannot bear these expenses single-handedly.

The Rural Water Supply Department is surveying other possibilities for supplying water to the countryside.

4. New approach for village water supply

The Government has adopted the following strategy: rehabilitate the installations i.e repair broken down stations. These installations are to be handed over to the villagers for management. In this respect, villagers must set up a water management committee. But prior to this, administrative authorities (Senior Divisional Officers, Sub-Divisional Officers, District Heads) are to be educated. Then contracts will be signed between Government and water management committees in the villages. Such contracts will stipulate that:

- Villagers undertake to ensure the functioning of stations by supplying fuel-lubricant and chlorine; they shall also ensure routine maintenance, hence, they must have competent operators;

- The State undertake to train these operators. It shall supply spare parts and its technicians shall be handy when there is a serious breakdown.

In future, a village that wants a water point has to apply and, of course, accept all stipulated engagements.

Asked what would happen if a village already having a water supply point refused to sign the contract, the project officials stated that they had never thought of such a possibility. They said that they counted on the authority exerted by administrative authorities and the comfort, facility and health of villagers who have potable water nearby. With regard to this project, the cart was put before the horse.

5. Lessons to be drawn from the project

All people agree that the Scan Water project has failed even though it was satisfying a basic need: water. Its designers committed a gross sociological and psychological error: free water and the establishment of a technologically advanced system in the rural area: water was pumped by electric power whereas manual pumps existed, and the Danes made the use of their technology compulsory (the danger of aid with strings). People of the countryside who enjoyed free water were not at all involved in the project. When work-teams went to the villages on the basis of criteria unknown to the rural people, they did not bother about the inhabitants and, worse still, failed to ask them questions, for instance, on underground water, rainfall or the place to plant a pillar. Mention has been made above of the systematic return to well digging, a technique encouraged and imposed by the Danes even in areas where harnessing was possible or less costly.

In an area as vital as water one would have expected the beneficiary population to be fully involved but this was unfortunately not the case.

The Scan Water example is so glaring because it concerns water. But then it is not unique. The beneficiary population has neglected existing water points

as well as their access roads. Their confusion when there is no water can be imagined. The former points have been completely silted up because they have not been cleared for years and the paths have been overgrown by grass.

III. FAILURES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

We have, systematically, presented two experiences acquired on projects with intense popular participation. One succeeded to involve most of the people benefiting from it and the other failed.

In reality, most projects did not secure the participation of the population. An examination of the causes of the failure led to a few recommendations which seek to ensure that the rural people participate more in development activities.

A. Causes of the failure

We shall consider just two since the time allotted for this paper did not allow us to interview the population.

1. Scorn of the rural population

In the urban area and mostly in the countryside project designers disregarded the rural population. They were considered more as those being assisted rather than partners in a development project. Thus, their participation in the various phases of the project was kept to the strictest minimum.

During project identification, national or international experts always came with preconceived ideas. Indeed, they went there with acquired or supposed experience of the area, to study the feasibility of a project already approved in other circles. I have some knowledge of the Cameroon hinterland because of my roots and, above all, because, for six years, I supervised social development projects amongst which were rural development and the socio-economic integration of marginalised people.

When a decision has been taken to conduct development activities for specific target groups like women or pygmies, little is done to find out their real needs. The expert, after studying the area-the first task of the animator or social worker in charge of a geographical area - identifies the people's needs. Very often, these needs exist but the search for solutions escapes those chiefly concerned right from the outset. This means the project was prepared without them and, sometimes, far away from them. Hence, projects designed to provide solutions to problems turned out to be unsuitable if not actually preposterous.

Many examples abound in water supply projects. I shall consider one of them: A community development worker in the forest area realized that despite the existence of several streams, there was a problem of potable water. In the village, there was only one point where water came out of the ground. This point was roughly developed by the villagers. The community development workers decided, for the sake of hygiene, to shelter this point. Hence, a concrete

structure was erected and a pipe installed to bring out water. Since the expression water flow did not exist in the local language, nothing was done to find out the flow of this spring nor its seasonal behaviour. The project was designed by the rural engineering technicians and was inaugurated in grand style by the Sub-Divisional Officer. But then in the dry season the pump was completely dry. Since the helpless population was unable to break the concrete, they started to drink water from brooks. No one taught them to boil the water. The result was an outbreak of water diseases hitherto unknown or less frequent in the area.

The shortage of water could have had other solutions. Talking to the people and, above all, involving them would have prevented the cementing of the spring bed, the installation of the pipe at a very high level and the sealing of the spring. A corrugated iron-sheet roof would have been better than the slab.

The expert felt, thought and acted as if the rural people knew nothing.

There are other examples in agriculture. Farmers in mountainous areas instinctively follow the mountain's gradient when making ridges. The result is that ridges are not made in square lines. The young agricultural engineer of the area saw this confusion and decided to remedy the situation. He had the ridges made in lines just as he was taught in school. The prescribed spacing was respected. The first rains carried away all the ridges. The engineer with his degree found it difficult to consult the peasant farmers on the suitability of their bent ridges.

The farmers have been deceived, very often, unconsciously, by experts. Most of them have thus been hostile to any innovation. This is a very serious situation for there can be no development without innovation.

During project execution, the people contribute through manual labour: digging trenches and supplying local materials.

At the evaluation level, they are once more forgotten. No one ever bothers to ask them whether they are satisfied or not with the project.

2. Absence of a real base

Many projects, no matter their magnitude, seem to be externally designed with no real base. Often they constitute a solution to an existing problem. But then the developing world is beset by very many problems that was all be addressed and everything is urgent. Unfortunately, there is a list of priorities that the rural people oppose and no one ever seeks their opinion.

At all levels, turn key projects have been executed. We know of turn-key factories completely designed and manufactured abroad; foreigners come to install equipment imported in its entirely; and foreigners operate the machines. If such foreigners are compelled to leave, the factory disappears along with them.

It is true that some of these factories failed even with the presence of foreigners. But this is due to other reasons.

Similarly, many turn-key projects have been implemented. NGOs which have brilliantly conducted a successful project in one desolate areas of the world want to make other poor people benefit from the same windfall. Often, they do this without the least adaptation. Last year, I received one NGO which Cameroon had approached to conduct a project on child protection. A contract was thus drafted and signed between the NGO and the Republic of Cameroon. By virtue of this agreement, the NGO and the Republic of Cameroon plan to implement in the Republic of Guinea ...Throughout the document both the Republic of Guinea and the Republic of Cameroon were mentioned.

You could not know in which country the project was to be implemented. Obviously, the NGO in question had just concluded a similar agreement with the Republic of Guinea. Instead of visiting Cameroon and trying to adapt their ideas to the realities of Cameroon, its experts merely given the same text to the secretariat, forgetting to replace Guinea with Cameroon wherever appeared. In order to save money, the plans drawn for Guinea would be used in building the project facilities even when the structures were to be built on Cameroonian soil. Nobody had thought about whether they would fit into the topography of the site in Cameroon or blend into the local architecture. What went for the buildings also went for the objectives.

Such projects are bound to fail once the foreign technical assistance is withdrawn because they neither sought the involvement or the interest of the people.

Coming from democratic traditions even in their feudal societies, Africans were traumatized by colonization which denied them any creative capabilities. This is still true, even today, was people passively accept what is imposed on them from outside and rapidly show their reluctance to participate at the least opportunity. When they have not invested anything in a project in terms of planning and financing, they are loath to go along.

B. Prospects for greater popular participation in development

In 30 years of independence, African economic development has failed. No model, whether capitalist in the Ivorian sense or socialist in the Tanzanian sense, has succeeded in securing the happiness of Africans. Today, moderate and progressive regimes alike are under the yoke of the economic crisis which is reflected by the debt burden. The continent where living was a joy (where the sunshine was reflected on the white teeth of the ebony-skinned child) has become the continent of misery and famine.

Allowing that the failure of development may have been caused in part by not involving the broad masses in the search for development, it could hardly be maintained that had the contrary been done, different results would have been achieved. Nothing indicates in one way or the other that this would have been the case. It can therefore safely be said as Pascal ventured (with African salt and pepper added) that even if the involvement of people would not necessarily lead to development, they should nevertheless participate because then, at least, they stand to gain in dignity and responsibility.

This paper will accordingly consider some future strategies as well as the place that should be accorded to popular participation in the social dimension which will determine Africa's development in the coming years.

1. Strategies

In order to elicit the people's participation in a project, several conditions must be fulfilled.

We shall attempt to develop four of such strategies relating to the involvement of those for whom projects are conducted is project profitability and harmony. New insights might emerge in reviewing the work of development committees.

a. Involvement of the people

In order to secure popular participation in a project, such participation should be elicited. This may sound a truism but it is a basic principle. It means that the experts must come down from their ivory towers and listen to the people in order to identify their needs. They must ask what type of solutions must be found to address those needs. Therefore, in preparing a project, they must involve the people in all the work needed to meet that need right from the planning stage. Whether financial or material (manual work) the contribution of the people to the implementation of the project, however modest that contribution may be, creates relationships between the project and the people and these make the people consider the project as theirs and make them prepared to defend and protect the project.

Above all, in order to enable the people to be actively involved, they should be educated and trained for it. Raising the quality of life of the people will enable them to acquire the skills necessary for transforming their environment in terms of genuine development.

When the people are better educated, better trained and enjoy good health they will become the primary and most essential development factor.

b. Project profitability

The project must bring about useful innovations that can be measured through evaluation results. And yet, in order for innovations to succeed, sight should not be lost of the fact that people who adopt innovations will evaluate the impact of the project only at their own level. The people will therefore participate, all the more as they perceive what they stand to gain in terms of material reward and labour savings or in terms of social standing and confidence. The two rewards together constitute a major asset in getting the project accepted and securing, for that reason, the enthusiasm of a greater number of the people.

c. Project harmony relative to the environment

There must be a measure of compatibility between project innovations and the cultural values in the project environment.

A project will have greater chances of integrating harmoniously into the environment if it respects the cultural values of the people. The people will be more prepared to support the project if it coincides with their values. Therefore, studies on the location of community projects should accord pride of place to the receiving environment. For example, if the project idea is to improve the consumption of animal protein, setting up a piggery in an area populated by muslims would be a non starter.

The environment therefore should incorporate innovations without disrupting the people's life style.

Consequently, the use of behavioural sciences would be needed to successfully elicit the participation of people in a development project. All donors investing in the project should strive to study, seriously, the environment in which they want to operate and avoid hasty generalizations which could stifle the originality of the people and cause them to lose interest.

d. Review of the organization of (official) development committees

The way in which development committees operate keeps them from fulfilling an essential part of their mission. When they are convened with all the media coverage involved, they devote to the general debate on local development problems most of the time they should have spent brainstorming other aspects such as the activities to be undertaken, the identification of resources to be mobilized and the specific area in which each concerned social community group should focus its activities.

Consequently, it would be advisable for the development committees to set up at each level, a permanent body responsible for doing the comprehensive work and reporting, periodically, on the results achieved.

2. The social dimension of adjustment (SDA) and popular participation in development

Since this paper did not set out to discuss the social dimension of the structural adjustment programme, it will be confined to citing the points of reference to the theme of this Conference.

Among other objectives, the SDA programme includes those explicitly formulated to promote, in the medium- and long terms, the participation of the poorest group in the economic recovery process.

In order to attain this objective, the Government plans to strengthen the process whereby grass-roots communities are participating in socio-economic development, particularly, through the creation of a community development fund.

While the creation of such a fund is commendable because it will enable the people to express their genuine needs in terms of finances to be placed at their disposal, it will be necessary to educate, inform, train and lead the

grass-roots communities so that they can use to best advantage, the financial resources and facilities provided by Government and other funding agencies.

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